

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

UNCLAS FRANKFURT 000392

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [GM](#)

SUBJECT: CAN THE CDU WIN AN ABSOLUTE MAJORITY IN THE HESSE ELECTIONS?

1. The latest polls in Hesse, released January 8 and 9, put CDU Minister-President Koch ahead of his SPD challenger Gerhard Boekel by near 15 percentage points. There is an increasing possibility that the CDU could win an absolute majority and not require any assistance from the FDP, who may have a hard time reaching the five percent threshold in its bid to return to parliament. Berlin-based polling institutes FORSA and Infratest dimap (in brackets) give the following projections:

CDU	47 (47)
SPD	32 (33)
Greens	12 (10)
FDP	5 (5)

2. The parties are reacting cautiously to the latest polls. On January 9, Interior Minister Volker Bouffier (CDU) warned that despite the CDU's excellent chances of winning, it would be risky to bet on a CDU absolute majority. "But every voter should make the CDU as strong as possible," Bouffier said, and "A vote for the FDP doesn't help us reach our goal." SPD Shadow Interior Minister Manfred Schaub told us that last year's national elections proved that voter sentiment could change at the last minute. He also said: "Elections in Hesse have always been close. One possible outcome is that so many CDU voters want an absolute majority that the FDP could fail to make the 5 percent threshold, thus giving the SPD-Greens a slight majority." (Comment: This is certainly possible. If the FDP lost enough votes to the CDU that the FDP did not reach the five percent mark, then the CDU could win a plurality, while still losing to the combined strength of the SPD and Greens.

3. Green Party caucus chief Tarek Al Wazir sees the weakness of the Hesse SPD as quite serious. In addition, the Green Party's own polling data indicates the FDP's return to state parliament is still uncertain. "I consider the probability of the FDP's making the 5 percent threshold as less than 50 percent right now. What is certain is that the number three position is ours." In contrast, FDP caucus chairman Joerg-Uwe Hahn says that the FDP has no fear of getting less than 5 percent. "People will be surprised at our strong showing. We saw strong gains in the national elections and we will see them in Hesse as well."

4. This message has been coordinated with Embassy Berlin.

BODDE